

Message Text

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13

ACTION NEA-12

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R 170617Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8326

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USUN NEW YORK 0390

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4376

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR KU

SUBJECT: KUWAITI VIEWS ON MID EAST SITUATION

SUMMARY: IN RECENT TALK WITH AMBASSADOR, FONMIN SABAH AL-AHMAD URGED US INCREASE PUBLIC SUPPORT OF SADAT, WHO NOW IN VULNERABLE POSITION BECAUSE OF HIS ENCOURAGEMENT PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ME CRISIS. SHAIKH SABAH DENIED GOK ROLE IN ME DISPUTE AS PROVIDING FULL ASSISTANCE TO CONFRONTATION STATES, BUT NON-INVOLVEMENT IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL. KUWAIT WOULD ACCEPT WHATEVER AGREEABLE TO CONFRONTATION STATES AS FAR AS THEIR TERRITORIES CONCERNED; HOWEVER, GOK COULD NOT RPT NOT COMPROMISE ON PALESTINIANS AND WOULD CONTINUE SUPPORT UNTIL SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. SABAH ALSO MENTIONED KUWAITI RESENTMENT OF MASSIVE US ARMS RESUPPLY TO ISRAEL, BUT SAID GOK WILL AVOID GRATUITOUS STATEMENTS THAT MIGHT BE HARD TO LIVE WITH LATER. ADDED HE FAVORED

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CODEL VISITS TO KUWAIT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH KUWAIT FONMIN SABAH AL-AHMAD, I ASKED HIM HOW HE SAW UPCOMING GENEVA CONFERENCE AND GENERAL AREA SITUATION SHAPING UP AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT IN TIME.

2. SABAH SAID EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT HAD DONE ALL HE POSSIBLY COULD TO ENCOURAGE PEACEFUL SOLUTION AND HE NOW IN HIGHLY VULNERABLE POSITION. GREAT MANY ARABS THOUGHT HE HAD DANGEROUSLY COMPROMISED HIS POSITION, AND THIS VIEW WOULD OBVIOUSLY TURN OUT TO BE RIGHT IF HE WAS NOW ECLIPSED. US MUST INCREASE ITS PUBLIC SUPPORT OF SADAT, AND THAT MEANT HELPING SADAT TO GET QUICK TANGIBLE RESULTS AT GENEVA CONFERENCE. IF SOMEONE LIKE BAKR OR SADDAM HUSSEIN OF IRAQ WERE TO TAKE OVER REINS IN EGYPT, IT WOULD NOT ONLY SPELL DEEP TROUBLE FOR MODERATE ARABS BUT COULD BRING ABOUT MAJOR NEW US-SOVIET CONFRONTATION.

3. I SAID, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I AGREED SADAT NEEDED AND DESERVED SUPPORT BUT OVERALL SITUATION MUST BE SEEN IN PERSPECTIVE. THERE WAS NO WAY ISRAEL WAS GOING TO WITHDRAW AS LONG AS IT BELIEVED THAT BY SO DOING IT WOULD SERIOUSLY WEAKEN ITS DEFENSES. REARMAMENT OF ISRAEL WAS NOT TO PERPETUATE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF POST 1967 TERRITORIES BUT TO MAKE AS SECURE AS POSSIBLE ISRAEL AS DEFINED BY UN RES 242 -- A RESOLUTION ACCEPTED BY ALL SIDES. WITH PRESENT ISRAELI LEADERSHIP ENCOUNTERING ROUGH SLEDDING INSIDE ISRAEL AND ELECTIONS COMING UP, I SAID, APPEARED TO ME ISRAELI POSITION COULD VERY EASILY BECOME MORE HAWKISH THAN BEFORE IF ITS SECURITY CONCERNS NOT MET. WE ASSUMED ARABS WOULD REFUSE COMPROMISE THEIR VITAL INTERESTS AND ISRAELIS MUST BE EXPECTED TO FEEL SAME WAY.

4. FONMIN SAID IN ANY CASE SADAT MUST BE SUPPORTED AT ALL COSTS, AND US SHOULD AVOID ANY ACTION WHICH WEAKENED HIM. AS FOR KUWAIT'S ROLE IN MID EAST DISPUTE, IT WAS TO PROVIDE FULL ASSISTANCE TO CONFRONTATION STATES BUT NON-INVOLVEMENT, IN ANY ASPECT, DIRECT OR INDIRECT, IN THEIR NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL. KUWAIT WOULD ACCEPT WHATEVER CONFRONTATION STATES WORKED OUT WITH ISRAEL REGARDING RETURN OF THEIR TERRITORIES, " AND IT NOT UP TO US KUWAITIS", SABAH SAID, TO "QUIBBLE ABOUT A FEW METERS OF EGYPTIAN OR SYRIAN LAND HERE OR THERE IF THE EGYPTIANS OR SYRIANS THEMSELVES DO NOT." HOWEVER, SAID FON
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MIN, IN VIEW DEPTH OF PALESTINIAN INFLUENCE IN KUWAIT, GOK IN NO POSITION BE COMPROMISING ON SUBJECT OF PALESTINAINS. THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCOMMODATED SOMEHOW, AND IN ABSENCE SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT OF "PALESTINAIN RIGHTS" (WHATEVER THAT MEANT), KUWAIT WOULD CONTINUE SUPPORT AIMS OF PALESTINIANS EVEN IF THEY HAD NO ONE ELSE IN WORLD TO TURN TO.

5. I SAID KUWAITI NON-INVOLVEMENT IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL MADE SENSE. HOWEVER, ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT KUWAITIS WOULD ENCOURAGE, NOT OPPOSE US EFFORTS TO HELP FIND PEACEFUL SOLUTION; AND YET KUWAITIS, ESPECIALLY YOUNGER ONES, SEEMED CURIOUSLY MORE NEGATIVE NOW THAN BEFORE OCTOBER WAR WHEN PROSPECTS FOR MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE SEEMED MUCH DIMMER. I SAID I FOUND THIS PHENOMENON RATHER DEPRESSING. IT WAS AS THOUGH KUWAITI YOUTH WAS AFRAID THAT SETTLEMENT WOULD SPELL END OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITANT ACTION OR THAT ARABS ARE ONCE AGAIN ABOUT TO BE HUMILIATED BY UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL. WHY COULD NOT KUWAITIS, WHO LIKED TO THINK BIG, SEE THAT JUST SETTLEMENT WOULD OPEN UP TREMENDOUS NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR GROWTH AND STRENGTHENING OF ARAB NATION?

6. FONMIN CONTENTED HIMSELF WITH REPLY THAT RESENTMENT OF ISRAEL AND US SUPPORT OF ISRAEL WAS DEEP AND OF LONG STANDING. HE ADDED THAT KUWAITIS STILL TRYING GET OVER SHOCK OF MASSIVE US ARMS RESUPPLY OF ISRAEL SINCE EARLY IN OCTOBER WAR, AN ACTION WHICH DEFIED THEIR COMPREHENSION. IT APPEARED TO MAN IN STREET THAT US MORE ANXIOUS TO DEFEND ISRAEL EVEN THAN USA ITSELF, AND THAT US INTENTIONALLY ATTACKING ARABS THROUGH ISRAEL. IN DEMOCRATIC KUWAIT NO ONE NEED BE AFRAID IN EXPRESSING HIS OPINION, HE SAID, NOR COULD ANYONE STOP HIS DOING SO. AS FAR AS OFFICIAL GOK POSITION WAS CONCERNED, SAID FONMIN, GOVT BELIEVED IT BEST AVOID THOSE CONTACTS AND GRATUITOUS STATEMENTS THAT MIGHT BE HARD TO LIVE WITH LATER. "OUR SILENCE IS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT", HE SAID.

7. I OBSERVED SUCH AN ATTITUDE DID NOT STRIKE A VERY POSITIVE NOTE. HOWEVER, MAIN POINT WAS THAT US EFFORTS MUST BE GIVEN CHANCE TO WORK. PROCESS FINDING EQUITABLE PEACE WOULD TAKE TIME -- PROBABLY LONGER THAN ARABS WOULD LIKE OR SEEMED TO THINK REASONABLE. SABAH JUST SHOOK HIS HEAD.

8. FONMIN SABAH AGREED WITH ME THAT CODEL VISITS TO KUWAIT WERE A CONFIDENTIAL

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GOOD THING -- THE MORE THE BETTER.
STOLTZFUS

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